

Abstract/Synthesis of UbD/DI Chapter One

Cole Phillips

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Abstract: Chapter one of Tomlinson's and McTighe's *Integrating [Differentiated Instruction](#) & Understanding by Design* talks, primarily, about a specific dichotomy of two similar concepts in the realm of understanding by design and of differentiated instruction. They lay the groundwork and foundation for a strong, step-by-step approach to student involvement, in all capacities.

Synthesis: As Russell Warren explains, "There needs to be a combination of proper curriculum and flexible instruction to relay the information to the students in an effective manner." And perhaps that is what Tomlinson and McTighe are trying, best, to explain. When these two separate, if similar, ideas are used hand-in-hand then we can find the best way, as the text posits, to address each and every student regardless of level of need in the classroom.

Through a host of axioms and formal processes, we are able to better understand concepts of [remediation](#), [extension](#), and of diversifying the classroom and its wide array of abilities and disabilities. Ashley

Godbout offered, “The most interesting and appealing thing I learned from this chapter was in Axiom 4. Assessments that review current curriculum and instruction are a perfect tool to show variation among students’ knowledge and understanding of concepts.”

An overall concept that seemed to resonate with all of block one appeared to be that of attesting to each and every need of our students, however specifically we must, in order to be effective future educators. Perhaps these universally agreed ideas are best addressed by Devin Boilard as he leaves us with two important questions posed by page eleven of the chapter: “What does it mean for my students to understand this topic in ways that are relevant, are authentic, and give them power as learners?” and, “What can I do to make sure each of my learners is fully supported in growing as fast and as far as possible in understanding this topic?”

Cheyenne

Throughout this chapter I realize that there were a lot of things that I may continue to think about for a while, but when I saw it I had thought that is definitely something I would do. As I continued to read I realized that, although I want to do this, as I thought I am definitely going to do this, I realized that I am going to need to put more effort into reading and I am combining both UBD and DI. This will make it so I have a curriculum design as well as instructional design that not only complement each other, but also cater to every student. I think that this first chapter has pointed out a lot of things that should have been obvious to me before, but I didn't really see them at the time. Now that I have these teachers about to, I am going to have to make sure I have been right at one of my elements, or focus more on one than the others. It takes a balance of all these elements to create quality learning and a quality learning environment. One of the ideas that stood out most to me, and that I will definitely use, is the formative and/or ongoing assessments that the student does. It is very beneficial because it gives feedback, and continues to develop each group and individual learning plans for each student. It is important to remember that each student has a different learning style, and although some students will have a similar learning style to others, no student is the same. They are all unique, and I must acknowledge this.

Cole Phillips

Chapter One:

Whether through processes of UbD or DI, we must come to understand the importance of our implications in the classroom. It's the 'what we teach,' that is, perhaps, most obvious to ourselves, but it is integral to look at this concept in collaboration with 'the who,' 'the where,' and 'the how.' One could provide every corollary and subsequent axiom in the world, every pro and con, superlative and pejorative, but it's the practical application of the linked concepts of Understanding by Design and Differentiated Instruction in the classroom that is truly important.

By understanding the students we teach, we can better understand how it is that we should go about doing it in a variety of ways. We are understood to have extensive knowledge of our respective content areas, but without the skills to effectively communicate the content in a way that applies to all students of different levels of learning abilities, we are little more than a walk, talking textbook. We must come to understand that UbD and DI are not programs, but are ways of thinking, and are concepts which must be kept consistently in mind, not only as teachers, but as lifelong learners. To whom, after all, are we really teaching? There is a consistent need for remediation, for extension, and for other manners of learning in the classroom, and unless we can relate ourselves, our own experiences, and our learned concepts to such situations, we are without ability to effectively manage a classroom.

Matt

Chapter One:

The biggest thing I found in chapter one was that if students are always learning, developing and growing, then you are doing your job proficiently. Growth in students is a result that every teacher should

strive to achieve. Axiom six further describes this point. Axiom five states that, “teachers should be prepared to provide opportunity and support to continually develop students’ understanding and capacity as thinkers.” In axiom two, page five we see that it is the teachers’ job to provide the opportunities and resources needed for students to develop.

One way I will ensure my students with opportunity is to continually develop their young minds, in attempt to allow them to have a long lasting understanding of the topic at hand. By doing this I will provide my students with a good base of knowledge, but also will allow them to create their own styles and be different from one another. In every one of my lessons I will strive to provide all my students with a solid, long lasting understanding. Another thing that will come of this is that my students will be exposed to multiple techniques, and styles. In math there are usually several approaches to one single problem. By presenting multiple ways to solve things, it will allow my students to pick which ways work best for them. I will incorporate group activities that are targeted to help certain learning styles, stress certain techniques, and even challenge them to think on their own.

Christopher

Chapter 1 in the UbD/DI book was a little difficult for me to get through. I felt that for the beginning part of the chapter it was trying to tell me that I could not make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich with only peanut butter or just jelly. I felt I understood the concept of using both Understanding by Design and Differentiated Instruction equally but the reiteration was unneeded. Under Axiom 2, there is a discussion of working with school specialists to pinpoint materials and information that would be helpful to the varying reading levels. This would obviously depend on the resources a school has to offer, but including other staff in the education of students seems like a great idea to incorporate into my future lessons. Axiom 3 brought up a great idea on what material to focus on to deal with differing levels of student learning. The book discusses the idea that slower learners should prioritize the core and essential information in a unit while advanced learners need challenges on critical parts of the learning material. Dr. Hardy uses a similar pattern in his teaching that I have witnessed. He would occasionally preface a piece of information saying it will not be asked on the test. This allows for students who are struggling to focus on other topics while advanced students can incorporate more detail into their work. Axiom 6 seems like an interesting and effective way to freshen ideas for lecture and student materials. Working with other teachers and learning their different ways of teaching would only benefit my own effectiveness with teaching differing levels of student skill and ability.

Michael

Reading reflection integrating differentiated instruction chapter 1

I found it very interesting the way that the text explained the two, differentiated instruction and understanding by design, as not only supportive of one another but necessary for the others function. Understanding by design, focusing on what we teach and assessment evidence, takes the normal way of planing a lesson and flips it around. Setting goals first and then building the lesson around it, instead of trying to find out what you need to teach and then setting goals, better designs the lesson to meet those specific goals(P2). Differentiated instruction, focusing on who, where, and how how we teach, makes sure teachers focus on procedures and processes the facilitate the best learning. Differentiated instruction will provide lessons suited for many types of learners in the coarse of one lesson(P3).

I found axioms three and five in the first chapter to be the most interesting integration of the two as it provides a way for the material to be taught without overlapping coverage from textbooks but reinforce the knowledge and further the unit. It also helps focus on trying to cover all learners. It reinforces the fact that learners in general need the instruction to be clear and reflect the content but it also focuses on learners who are struggling and learners who are advanced. It lays out that struggling learners need to know essential knowledge and to understand the content before they move on. The text shows that advanced learners need to be presented with material that will grant them expertise in their area.

Russell Warren

As Carol Ann Tomlinson and Jay McTighe allude to, Understanding by Design and Differentiated Instruction are two separate sides of the same coin. They hold similar responsibilities and actions, both serve the same purpose, but cannot exist without the other. I found it fairly difficult to decide on a specific, concrete answer for either of the terms, as each is so invested in the other. The two serve the purpose of “crafting powerful curriculum in a standards-dominated era and ensuring academic success for the full spectrum of learners” (p.2). There obvious district, state, and country wide obligations to be met by the students and the teacher, but spewing the information out and having the students copy it down isn’t the most effective – and truly does not provide the best education framework – for the students. There needs to be a combination of proper curriculum and flexible instruction to relay the information to the students in an effective manner. I understood this – what surprised was the extent at which the axioms and corollaries went. Not only do we, as teachers, need to recognize that students need variance in time and support, but we have to constantly provide opportunities for the expression of said flexibility. The students must also be constantly reminded where they should be headed with their work, to make sure that they do not fall off task. However, they must not be stifled by instruction. The entire processing of teaching, and specifically implementing UbD and DI is one of a give and take nature – there will never be one defined solution for any situation, and it will never be the same. The prospect of teaching is one that forever changes and will never be the same, so we must be open to flexibility in learning but regimented in what we provide as instruction.

Ashley Godbout

The most interesting and appealing thing I learned from this chapter was in Axiom 4. Assessments that review current curriculum and instruction are a perfect tool to show variation among students’ knowledge and understanding of concepts. The scenario given for this axiom is a perfect example of how assessments could be used in curriculum design. I know the pre-assessment will be helpful in any subject but especially in math classes. The level of understanding and abilities in math classes can cover a wide range of students. If the class moves too fast then the teacher will lose students but if it moves too slowly then those on the extension spectrum will get lost. If there is a significant amount of students who don’t understand part of the unit then that will be focused on. However, if the majority shows deep

understanding then the teacher wouldn't need to set aside a large chunk of time to focus on this. In both situations there will probably be a few students who are on the opposite side which requires the teacher to put students into small group instructional sessions and additional, or alternate, homework to work on their individual needs. Having assessments throughout a unit is critical to seeing student progress. If a student falls behind or moves ahead then an appropriate decision would be to move groups around and assess individual learning plans. This concept of assessments is so important to student growth and understanding each individually and as a whole. The teacher is equipped to make sure all students can and will succeed in their classroom.

Devin Boilard

Chapter One: UbD and DI an Essential Partnership

This chapter was a great introduction into the design and definition of these two concepts and made clearer the information that was gathered from the Chapter Nine reading. I enjoy the emphasizing of the point that these two methods work only in their pairing, not as separate identities. I find much validity and support in their following arguments and examples throughout the reading. I must admit that this chapter did give me some anxiety as to the task of incorporating Differentiated Instruction for all the specific needs of my students. I believe that I am capable of being creative with my approaches but have concerns over the time allotment and the inevitable falling through the cracks of at least one of my students. I do not do well with failure and know that throughout my career I will have students that for numerous reasons will flounder in my class due to factors that have no direct correlation to my classroom management. (The following chapter outlines one such scenario.) This will need to be something that I work on; I will need to be able to learn how to address these situations both personally and professionally.

Lastly this chapter ends with the posing of two fantastic questions, both on pg.11, "What does it mean for my students to understand this topic in ways that are relevant, are authentic, and give them power as learners?" and "What can I do to make sure each of my learners is fully supported in growing as fast and as far as possible in understanding this topic?" I have wrote both these questions down and plan to return to them often this semester when analyzing my approaches to teaching.

Ashley Libby

This chapter talked about the different sub categories, or axioms, of differentiating instruction and understanding by design in the classroom. It talks about how we have to be flexible to the students that have learning disabilities and to the students who have advanced learning abilities. You have to remember to not forget the students that are in the middle of the learning curve. You have to equip the students with the necessary tools to be successful in your class as well as their future classes. There are seven axioms to think about when planning a lesson, implementing a lesson, and reviewing the results of the lesson.

Axiom one explains that the goal of the curriculum is to deepen the students understanding of the subject. Axiom two says that students need to be given opportunities and support to prove what they have learned during the lesson. Axiom three says to follow the backward design and it explains how all learners will benefit. Axiom four, states to constantly be checking the curriculum assessment and to make changes where necessary. Axiom five says for the teachers to provide opportunities for the students to explore, interpret, and change their way of thinking. Axiom six, talks about technology in the classroom, meeting

all student's needs, and getting advice from specialist. Axiom seven says that the teacher must adapt the teaching methods and tools with the overall goal of bettering the students understanding of the curriculum. As a teacher I have to be constantly thinking of all these to make sure that I am meeting the needs of every student. My goal is to make sure students fully understand what is being taught to them and to make sure that they get the most out of my classroom.

Tyler Michaud

The first chapter of *Integrating Differentiated Instruction + Understanding by Design*, by Carol Ann Tomlinson and Jay McTighe, focused on the essential bond between DI (Differentiated Instruction) and UbD (Understanding by Design). Teachers attend to at least four elements while catering to their class and curriculum: whom they teach, where they teach, what they teach, and how they teach. The linkage of UbD and DI exists because each serves specific elements; for example, UbD focuses on what they teach, while DI concentrates on how they teach, one could not exist without the other for you cannot know *how you teach* if you are unaware of *what you are teaching*. The bond of UbD and DI extends further than this example and the chapter captures this idea. UbD focuses on the evidence we need to collect and, as aforementioned, what they teach. Meanwhile, DI encompasses the others, including: whom they teach, where they teach, and how they teach.

Knowing UbD and DI could be helpful when planning classroom assignments as they both give insight into the student body. Classrooms come in all shapes and sizes and contain students whose histories are all different, DI can help the teacher look past the differences as a challenge in order to help you find ways to maneuver them into your class. By successfully using your knowledge of DI and UbD the curriculum should be well-rounded and focused so that every student can have a chance to be effective in the classroom.

Tyler Brown

Understanding by Design/Differentiating Instruction Chapter One

The basic concept put forth in the opening chapter reveals the fundamentals of *Understanding by Design* and *Differentiating Instruction*. It becomes evident by reading the chapter that one cannot effectively exist without the other. The reason for that can be understood by defining the two concepts.

Understanding by Design is mainly dedicated to establishing a sound curriculum followed by accurate assessment so that knowledge can be gained about possible improvements. This portion mainly focuses on “what” and “how” we teach. Understanding comes differently for different types of learners, so to work on a balanced curriculum would be to lead a classroom towards *Understanding by Design*.

Differentiating Instruction also focuses on how we teach, but also addresses the “whom” and the “where”. The basic idea behind this comes from understanding that a diverse population of students will not all benefit from the same models of instruction due to their different experiences and beliefs. In relation to what I learned at my earlier EDU courses at SMCC, this chapter focuses on the importance of avoiding teaching to the “bell curve”. To do that would be to focus instruction on mainly the group of students who are somewhere in the middle of understanding the concepts of the class while paying less attention to the disadvantaged and advanced students.

Meghan

Chapter 1

I liked the way the author introduced the four main areas of focus when teaching; “whom they teach (students), where they teach (learning environment), what they teach (content), and how they teach (instruction)” (2). As a teacher it will be important to not lose sight of any of these focus in order to be successful. In the classroom, Understanding by Design focuses on what we teach and what we need to do to evaluate the work of our students. In contrast, Differentiated Instruction focuses on whom, where, and how we teach. When combined successfully, Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design, “provide structures, tools, and guidance for developing curriculum and instruction based on our current best understandings of teaching and learning” (3).

The main goal of a well-designed curriculum is to develop the deep understanding of the students. In order to do this Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design must be included in all classroom environments. In addition, it is evident that effective curriculum development explores both the priorities and purposes of all given information. In order to keep up with developing society it will be essential that both curriculum and assessment techniques are constantly reviewed. This will ensure the most efficient and understandable ways to focus students and sort through the priorities of the information they are given. Through Understanding by Design and Differentiated Instruction teachers must provide the opportunity for students to develop their abilities to “interpret, apply, shift perspectives, empathize, and self-assess” (8). In order to have a successful classroom environment both Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design should be used on a daily basis.
